

Committee on Resources

resources.committee@mail.house.gov

[Home](#) [Press Gallery](#) [Subcommittees](#) [Issues](#) [Legislation](#) [Hearing Archives](#)

Testimony of Congressman David Hobson

Before the

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

National Aviation Heritage Area Act H.R. 280

September 16, 2003

I.

Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and to testify in support of H.R. 280, the National Aviation Heritage Area Act. I have introduced this legislation with Reps. Mike Turner, John Boehner, and virtually all of the Ohio Delegation to create a National Aviation Heritage Area to enhance significant historical resources of interest to all Americans and to further national awareness of Ohio's key role in the history of aviation. On this year's 100th anniversary of the first powered flight, I can think of no better way to preserve and carry on the years of hard work and preparation leading up to 2003, than to establish this heritage area.

As a life long Ohioan, aviation enthusiast, and regular at the Dayton Air Show, I am deeply committed to enabling the Wright Brothers' story to be told as often and in as many ways as possible. With each telling of their story, you never know who might be inspired.

II.

Few technological advances have transformed the world or our Nation's economy, society, culture, and national character as the development of powered flight. As a result, the industrial, cultural, and natural heritage legacies of the aviation and aerospace industry in the State of Ohio are nationally significant.

Ohioans have been at the forefront of every major development associated with flight. But just as important as the Wright Brothers, John Glenn, and Neil Armstrong – are the inventors, scientists and engineers that have made it possible in less than 100 years to not only fly between continents, but also to fly to the moon and maintain a presence in space. While many people know that the Wright brothers built the first airplane in a bicycle shop in Dayton, Ohio, few are aware that this corner of Ohio continued to nurture an astonishing number of aviation innovations leaving behind a rich legacy of buildings, sites, and historical artifacts. Many of those innovations occurred and are occurring each day at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, considered by many as the birthplace, home, and future of aerospace. Together, these sites comprise the classic case for a successful heritage area—historical resources associated with a nationally important theme in a geographically tight region with local institutions with a proven track record of successful partnerships.

III.

In preparation for the establishment of the National Aviation Heritage Area, the Dayton Aviation Heritage Commission held a series of three public meetings in Columbus, Cleveland, and Dayton to generate ideas and build awareness of the heritage area concept. Comments were also accepted through a website established to facilitate public participation. Additionally, five National Park Service and Dayton Aviation Heritage Commission studies and planning documents have demonstrated that sufficient historical resources exist to establish the National Aviation Heritage Area.

Local governments, the State of Ohio, and private sector interests have embraced the heritage area concept and desire to enter into a partnership with the federal government to preserve, protect, and develop

the heritage area for public benefit. The area would strengthen, compliment and support the aviation-related resources within the National Park Service, especially the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park.

IV.

As you all know, heritage areas are federally recognized collections of historic sites that are linked by theme and geographical proximity that have the potential to work together to promote tourism and improve historic preservation efforts. Heritage areas serve to protect and preserve our Nation's heritage through community-based partnerships that emphasize local control and direction. The protection of parks and the preservation of our special places is greatly enhanced when the people who live in the region and are uniquely qualified to care for them are involved. That is accomplished through the establishment of heritage areas.

The National Park Service has outlined four critical steps that need to be taken prior to Congressional designation of a national heritage area. These include study, public comment, demonstration of support, and commitment from the community. The National Aviation Heritage Area meets all these tests.

The National Aviation Heritage Area would be administered through the U.S. Department of the Interior with the requirement that appropriated federal funds would be matched dollar for dollar with non-federal funds. This legislation authorizes up to \$10 million over 15 years, with a provision that not more than \$1 million may be appropriated in any single fiscal year. Additionally, the authority of the Secretary of Interior to provide assistance will terminate after 15 years. This is in full keeping with the recommendation for heritage areas by the Department of the Interior and authorizing legislation for heritage areas established since 1996.

This legislation is a major recommendation of the Dayton Aviation Heritage Commission, which sunsets at the end of this year and was established by Congress in 1992. The commission was charged with the responsibility of creating a plan for the continuation of the preservation, conservation and interpretation of Ohio's aviation heritage into the next 100 years.

In 1992, former Dayton Area Representative Tony Hall, and I, authored the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992, which established the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park and the Dayton Aviation Heritage Commission. Since enactment, partnerships among the Federal, State, and local governments and the private sector have greatly assisted the development and preservation of the historic aviation resources in the Miami Valley. I strongly believe an aviation heritage area centered in Ohio is a suitable and feasible way to increase collaboration, promote heritage tourism, and build on the established partnerships among Ohio's historic aviation resources and related sites.

V.

The National Aviation Heritage Area would encompass a core heritage area containing significant historic sites in Montgomery, Greene, Warren, Miami, Clark and Champaign counties in Ohio. Under the provisions of this legislation, the established management entity of the area would have three years after enactment to compile and submit to the Secretary of Interior a management plan. Included in the plan would be an inventory of the hundreds of aviation resources contained in the core area. Once included in the heritage area, sites will be eligible for technical assistance as well as historic preservation and educational and cultural funds. Also included would be the Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum in Wapakoneta, Ohio and the Wilbur Wright Birthplace and Museum in Millville, Indiana. These are included because they are significant sites within easy driving distance of the core area and would enhance the visiting experience of an aviation enthusiast visiting the region.

VI.

This legislation is fully in the spirit of President Bush's recent "Preserve America" executive order which declared, "It is the policy of the Federal Government to provide leadership in preserving America's heritage ...by promoting intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships for the preservation and use of historic properties."

The Members of Congress from Ohio have a long record of promoting the preservation of aviation sites in Central Ohio. We have previously worked together to secure funding for the U.S. Air Force Museum, the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, and the National Aviation Hall of Fame. We have worked closely with the community to make sure that this year's Centennial of Flight celebration was a huge success.

This legislation would provide even greater support and public awareness of Ohio's many contributions to aviation history and the role both civil and military aviation played in establishing the 20th century as the American century. It is important that these significant sites be preserved and properly interpreted for future generations and establishing a National Aviation Heritage Area during the 100th anniversary year of flight is a solid step in that direction.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this legislation.